

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

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THE SPIRIT OF INQUIRY

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the spirit of constant inquiry and persevering search modern science owes its triumph. The mind of every great researcher is quickened by that spirit; his attitude is one continuous questioning nature; his habit is to persevere in finding answers to all the questions which that spirit brings to birth. This attitude and this habit of the scientist have produced marvellous results which have rendered great services to mankind; but the very soul of all of them is perhaps the least taken advantage of by ordinary people. Of all the gifts to humanity, the example set by the scientific researcher through this attitude and habit is the greatest—the example of asking questions, of making inquiries, of not resting till the true answer is found. Men and women are the poorer for not cultivating this mental attitude; confusion and unhappiness within and around them thicken and life-problems pile up waiting to be solved; then—Death arrives and separates the Soul from the body.

Life is enriched when we take an intelligent interest in it and ask, for instance, why we are so different in body, in character, in mind, from our neighbours and even from our next of kin.

The second outstanding contribution made by modern science to human benefit and which has directly resulted from this spirit of quest and questioning is that the whole universe is ruled and governed by the Law inherent in matter. Every event, every

phenomenon in every kingdom of Nature, is an effect from a cause. Not by chance or by accident, not in a haphazard way are functions performed in the visible, material universe. Wherever science extends its domain it finds effect related to cause. This fundamental and true principle offers guidance to man in prosecuting his search into his own life-problems. If his body and character and mind are different from those of his brother or friend, that difference cannot be accidental; it is rooted in definite causes.

These two principles of modern science, the spirit of inquiry and the habit of tracing effects to causes, are nothing new. They are rediscoveries—old, forgotten truths buried under the dunghill made by theology during the Dark Ages of Europe. Modern science arose as a protestant movement against the dogmatic and sectarian blind belief engendered by the church. From blind belief science flew to blind disbelief, and in overthrowing the ignorance and superstition inculcated by orthodox religion it evolved the spirit of quest; and in proving that the age of miracles had never existed it found that Law functioned—in the gigantic stars overhead, as in the tiny grains of sand beneath our feet.

These age-old truths, rediscovered by modern science, were also the motor forces of great ancient cultures. For example, India, in more than one glorious era of culture these two factors played their important parts. What constituted the grandeur of the Upanishadic culture? Did the human mind ever soar higher in its quest of knowledge in any historically known period? Did it ever find the repose of enlightenment which only final answers bestow and which the Sages of the Upanishads obtained in contemplating the truths recorded in symbol and song by the Seers of the Vedas? The soul-scientists of ancient India searched the invisible while the modern scientist, limited by his senses and his mind, tries only to know the visible. Similarly, the Law of causation of the ancient scientist touched the universe of mind and of morals, of thought, will and feeling. The Sages of old taught the doctrine of Karma, the law of ethical causation, of moral compensation, *i.e.*, the Law by which moral and intellectual phenomena and events can be traced to their right causes.

Humanity today suffers from failure to apply these two principles. Men and women do not ask, do not inquire, do not probe the so-called mystery which surrounds them. Nor do they apply to their own conditions, or to their capacities or limitations, the truth about causation. Who or what made the congenital idiot, the born deaf-mute? Why is a fool born to wise parents and a saint born in a family of thieves? How can a man overcome his defects—mental or moral? And there are a hundred other important questions vital to our life, our contentment, our happiness and our progress.

A large number of people take it for granted that the ultimate problems of life and death, of God and Nature, etc., can never be solved by man. Such do not take into account the answers already found, the solutions already offered by the Sages and Seers of the entire ancient world. They are totally ignorant of the fact that not only have efforts been made but definite truths have been arrived at. They repeat parrotlike: "God and life and death are insoluble mysteries." This is contrary to the scientific spirit of questioning. Modern science being young and its research proceeding from form to form and from detail to detail, and depending primarily on the five senses, it does not concern itself with questions which are of the greatest significance to men and women—their joys and ambitions, their attainments and frustrations. Though modern science is popular and its influence is growing, it has not been able to wean people away entirely from bigotries and superstitions.

For ordinary men and women, the sphere of religion, the subjects of soul, of real happiness, of the meaning of suffering, of the bewildering differences between man and man, of chaos in the midst of the orderly procession of Mother Nature, are vital and most near. In the sphere of his own particular religion and on these very topics, an intelligent, nay more, a fearless spirit of questioning on the part of every person is most necessary. Sectarianism and communal pride are fostered and these crush the spirit of inquiry in the human mind. The healthy doubt which awakens us to institute inquiry is absent. There is not a religion today whose officiating priests encourage bold and fearless questioning. Religious leaders will not say to their followers: "Question, ascertain, accept or reject

as your reason and your conscience dictate." They will not advise their followers, in the words of Browning, to

...prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

But what the priest does not do, that the prophet has ever done. The prophets were once men like ourselves, and they became perfected men by asking questions, by seeking knowledge, by satisfying mental and moral yearnings. Why should we not do likewise? But how many today would apply the methods of their prophets to their own problems? They had the humility of the great, reverence for the sacred mysteries of Nature and Deity, and also the sure confidence that to these ultimate problems there *were* answers and that these not only could be found but should be found.

Questioning religious beliefs and trying to understand religious dogmas is not rejecting religion. It is just because the religious habit will not permit frank discussion and vigorous questioning that intelligent men and women throw religion overboard. Truth is never afraid of being cross-examined and those who are fearful of being questioned are not possessors of truth.

On the other hand, it is not the right kind of rationalism which rejects all that it cannot immediately and completely understand. As no surgeon in cutting up the body has found the soul, therefore no soul exists—thus reasons the false rationalist. Yet the same mind believes in the existence of mental suffering, of emotional depression and elation, which are as invisible as is the Soul. A true rationalist always remains an inquirer—humble, reverent, confident, looking for an answer or an explanation to the phenomena he has not solved, and should such answers and explanations prove him wrong in his erstwhile opinions, he is willing to let them go, ever crying: "Light, more light!" Has there ever been a greater rationalist than Gautama, the Buddha? His profound philosophy and the way of life He taught, which He Himself walked, are splendid examples of the scientific attitude and the habit of questioning. What started him on his Great Quest? The sight of old age, of disease, of a corpse

and lastly, of a *Sannyasi*. What makes a person old? Who curses him with disease? Why does death overtake him? How can one conquer death, overcome disease, enjoy old age as the *Sannyasi* seems to do? When courtiers, learned Brahmans and others could not answer and explain, Gautama left his palace, kingdom, wife, son, and set out on the greatest of journeys. "There must be refuge," he said, and added:

What good gift have my brothers, but it came
From search and strife and loving sacrifice?

In these three words, Search, Strife, Sacrifice, lies all hope of human progress. Many Buddhas, many Tirthankaras, many Christs, many Zarathushtras, have taught the Wisdom which renews life, endows life-struggles with a new light, mellows the mind, elevates the heart. Obstacles and difficulties do not disappear, but we have developed the mental muscle, the moral nerve, the spiritual stamina which enable us to fight our way through obstacles and difficulties to the triumph which is Peace and Understanding.

THE technique does not create the vision; it is the vision that creates the technique. It is important to come upon that vision of life and actually to live that way throughout life. Unless education helps the student to do that, it has very little significance. It means we must be students all our life, living with deep and fundamental questions. One such question is, what does it mean for a human being to live in harmony with the cosmic order?

The twenty-first century demands a total change in our outlook on life and our vision of education.

— P. KRISHNA

REINCARNATION IN NATIONAL LIFE

THERE is no doubt, and it is a matter of actual experience, that reincarnation as a doctrine profoundly influences those who believe in its reasonableness and have studied its processes. Between the attitude of one who does not believe in reincarnation and another who does, there exists a great gulf. Reincarnation, together with its twin, the doctrine of Karma, changes one's view of life and its problems. These two doctrines are like two new eyes through which we see the world and its affairs. A new view of the world not only creates a changed attitude, but also provides a new basis of action, a powerful lever for reforming our character and conduct.

Imagine for a moment that our legislators and administrators were familiar with reincarnation, accepted as true the ancient teachings. How different would be their programme and policy! The outlook on national affairs would undergo a change as great as that experienced by the individual who transforms his life because of the vision of the twin doctrine of Reincarnation and Karma.

Let us, to begin with, picture a nation-state whose leaders and statesmen accept the doctrine of reincarnation, and compare such a state with our present conditions. Everywhere in the world today stupendous changes are taking place. Money and other forms of wealth are regarded as basic, as the very foundation of our civilization. Educational and all other kinds of reforms are made subservient to currency and economic problems. A balanced national budget is considered much more important than a balanced national character! In the chaos created by financiers and politicians, only a few real thinkers possess the vision of a spiritual humanity; and among these few, a still smaller number are familiar with the law of reincarnation as part and parcel of the larger sweep of the law of cycles or periodicity.

National defects and deficiencies are as much Karmic effects as our individual weaknesses and limitations. If the human soul grows through experience of many lives, national progress is also affected by reincarnation. The soul of a people, what the Irish poet, AE, called the National Being, is a tangible fact and a potent reality. The

collective action of a people makes national Karma, as our own individual actions make our individual Karma.

How is national Karma formed? It is not just formed by all the citizens' personal or individual Karma. The collective Karma of all the citizens of a state is not the whole of national Karma. There is an additional factor, and an important one. National Karma is directly made by the legislators and leaders who are responsible for state-policies. A country's foreign policy or economic policy is not directly made by the citizens of the country. A king in an autocratic state, a president in a republic, elected representatives in a democratic nation, and so on—they are in the main responsible for the forging of national Karma. Strange as it may seem, it is certainly true that a nation may pursue policies and actions which most of the individual citizens in their private capacity regard as evil. To murder a fellow-citizen is evil, but to kill thousands of our fellow-men in war is considered justifiable. To speak a lie is regarded as heinous, but in national affairs lies are not only permitted and recognized but those in the foreign office who speak them without being found out are called great diplomats and honoured for their diplomacy! To steal and to rob is evil—none of us would think of it; but people feel proud when their own government invades and annexes other nations' territories—it is called extending the frontiers of state! Such acts of statecraft make national Karma, which is distinct and separate from personal Karma.

Supposing reincarnation were accepted as a fact by our politicians, how would they proceed? The first thing they would note would be the assets of the nation—not metal and oil, not agricultural produce, not commercial and trade efficiency. The moral and spiritual assets of a people are more important; national virtues produce mental faculties and physical capacities. Our moral asset, for each one of us, is the most important; a man of noble character is superior to one of giant mind; a man of character evolves capacity, and what is true of an individual is true of a nation. So if we desire to participate in the work of real reconstruction of the nation, we must begin by analysing and classifying our national character, making a list of our national virtues and moral powers. Such a list of national

powers and virtues would immediately reveal to us our limitations and weaknesses. No individual can reform himself or herself without knowing what is there to reform, and so also with a nation. But we must know our virtues first, for then we shall be able to deal better with our vices. The reserve strength of a nation is very important, like the reserve strength of a sick person.

The principal teaching about reincarnation is that life is a school; that the human soul is learning in the school of life. Reincarnation implies that we have learnt something in the past and are here to learn and grow further. Thus the word "education" takes on a new meaning. Education of a whole nation in the light of reincarnation is seen as a very different proposition than mere training for efficiency, for commercial gain, even for the earning of a livelihood. All these and many more factors occupy an undeserved importance in the present educational schemes. Reincarnation would assign to them their legitimate position.

Education of the soul, the reincarnating Ego, would become the first object for consideration in a state whose leaders accept reincarnation. Children would be seen as old souls in young bodies. At present, the stress is mainly on the training of the mind and partly of the body. Body and senses are regarded as but servants of the mind and no more. The soul and its mastery over mind and senses, its experiences as character, are not taken into account. The body is never thought of as a temple of the soul. The question of education would assume quite different fundamental proportions if reincarnation were accepted as a fact. In any scheme of education and training, and in every department of any scheme, the soul and its needs would be given predominant consideration, while at present it is not given any consideration at all.

Consider the much debated question of religious education. If reincarnation were taken into account, then the many conflicting religions of today would be seen for what they actually are. Much of chaff and husk and little of grain is to be found in each religion as it now exists. If reincarnation is a fact, what religion would we teach the child? If we teach one or another of the conflicting religions, we but perpetuate existing religious differences, leading

to communal claims and conflicts. If we do not teach religion at all, we shut out a very important branch of education. What is called moral education is a poor substitute; for, mostly ethical platitudes without a basis of knowledge and philosophy are taught, and no intelligent child is going to accept that seriously. Religious education has to be unsectarian; not just one religious book, but holy books of all religions contain nuggets of truth. A noble character is first and foremost unsectarian. Religious sectarianism is the greatest obstacle to soul-development; and in Indian national life it has proved to be a curse. Even among those who are familiar with the doctrine of reincarnation, religious sectarianism dies hard and persists long. If reincarnation is true, then the religion of the soul is the highest religion; and the soul is above creeds and religions as ordinarily understood, as it is above sex, caste, race or colour.

Take another class of citizens—the criminal class. How would a state accepting reincarnation deal with its criminals? Capital punishment for a murderer is still in force in many countries; and our whole system of dealing with criminals of one class or another is based on the false doctrine of retaliation—"an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Penitentiaries are not schools; the prisoner is neither educated nor reformed. No doubt numerous schemes are being tried out; but the philosophical and psychological basis of all such schemes leaves out of consideration the soul, the growth of the soul, the evolution of the soul, through reincarnation. The criminal is a reincarnating ego, therefore an evolving soul. Most crimes result from psychic disease of one kind or another. We have schools for the blind and the deaf in body; but for the mentally blind or morally deaf we have no school, no clinic; they are dealt with in the spirit of cruelty and retaliation.

Turn to another aspect of education: the citizen's training so that he may have a proper global outlook. This particular item is very important, because in this racial cycle the world is fast reaching a point where a true perception of globalization would save our civilization. The greatest problem confronting the world today is the problem of the relationship between nation-states and the

emerging global civilization. National arrogance, national jealousies, national greeds, are difficult, nay impossible, to reconcile with the harmonious growth of a world which is growing into a global unit—bound by the discoveries of science, by the ties of culture, by the growth of knowledge. On the one hand, television, telephone, Internet, etc., have unified the world, have destroyed separative frontiers, have given a deathblow to the spirit of nationalism. On the other hand, trade jealousies, commercial rivalries, national and racial pride, the spirit of exclusiveness, etc., persist, and in every nation politicians who are not philosophers, economists who are not philanthropists, are endeavouring to perpetuate a political and economic system whose cycle is over. The day of competing and rivalling nation-states is over. Everywhere revolution, dictatorship, all other devices, are proving their futility; and do what they might, no one can stop the emergence of the international state and global civilization.

What a stupendous difference it would make if people who are in power, who mould and shape the foreign policies of nation-states, accepted the doctrine of reincarnation! They would see what every student of Theosophy perceives, that the institution called the nation is but a playground for evolving souls; it is but an instrument by which the human soul is learning lessons and growing in experience. Politicians accepting reincarnation would handle their work differently. First and foremost they would be learners, humble enough to recognize that through their position of power they as souls are learning lessons, are making their own personal Karma. They would not be intoxicated with power and their sense of responsibility would undergo a change. Next, they would recognize that their own state is offering all citizens and inhabitants an opportunity to learn, to grow, to evolve; that real national greatness does not consist in obtaining new territories, in securing spheres of influence, in outdoing the neighbouring states, in one manner or another.

The foundation of an international state should be the doctrine of the immanence of Deity, which results in the solidarity of all men and women. The common origin of all is Spirit. All are born of the

Spirit and each is an immortal soul. The differences of mental development and evolution that we find among people are due to Reincarnation and Karma, which are like the steel structure of the new edifice. We of this day and generation are in a transition period. With changing attitudes, the building of the new Global State might become a reality. For this, we must labour and exert wisely and well.

WHERE shall we find the true foundation for a changed civilization that all men and women can see and stand on? It is not philosophies nor religions nor political panaceas that are needed; but Knowledge, and a wider scope of vision than the vicissitudes of one short physical life. The knowledge that is greater than all the forms of religion ever invented is the knowledge of the very nature of man himself, for himself and in himself. For we are not here as things apart; we are here because of one great sustaining Cause—finite and omnipresent, not separate from us, nor from any other being. It is the same in all beings above the human and in all beings below the human—the very root of our natures, the very man himself. It is the Source of all powers and of all actions, whether good or evil. Then, everything that is done by beings affects all beings, and all that is has been caused by beings, each one affected according to its share in the cause. What the past has been, we are experiencing now—our lives now being but repetitions of lives that preceded them. What the future will be, we are making now—the lives to come depending entirely on the choice and direction of our thoughts and actions now.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

THEOSOPHY is only the modern name given to the Ancient Wisdom. This may appear a large claim, but if we take into account the records we have, even today, of the thoughts and findings of men from past centuries, we see that there is a recorded tradition of facts and laws.

Theosophy draws attention to the common faculties of all men and to their use. On the one side it is intensely metaphysical. It teaches us to seek in the mind and the understanding for the Source of the life in us and around us in all departments of Nature; to understand its processes of evolution and development through history and pre-history; to make some practical present-day application of this knowledge of the past gained through individual research, and to share it with others; to anticipate the future in some way, so that personal and community life might be led towards an ideal goal. This is the practical side of Theosophy.

It is not for the first time that systems have arisen that follow this pattern: metaphysical investigation of origins and possible futures; practical decisions taken on the basis of such investigation; and the sharing of their findings by individuals and groups.

Has Theosophy, then, something special to offer along practical lines? It has, but as the ethics of Theosophy are based on metaphysical principles, it is the latter which must first be considered before we turn to the practical application side. Let us also not lose sight of the findings and records of other seekers in the past and in the present, whose efforts have left their impress in the realms of religion, science and philosophy.

First of all, Theosophy posits a Universal Ideal Source, infinite, unconditioned, timeless. This is not a substitute for the Personal God of religions; it transcends all limited deities, all limited ideas. It is not *a* deity but is ABSOLUTE DEITY ITSELF. It is not this DEITY which manifests and produces all the multiplicity of forms and entities around us, but, necessarily, only an *aspect* of IT. The ABSOLUTE can neither condition nor be conditioned. What then are the conditions? There has to be, first, the *idea* of "condition"; the first

stage of any manifestation can only be conceived of as the operation of the Universal Mind. From this "first-born" of the ABSOLUTE (which is really "childless" in the ideal sense) emanates the duality of Spirit and Matter, Subject and Object.

These cannot remain isolated. There could be no manifestation at all if they were not united at all points, inextricably intermixed and interwoven. That which links them is the "bridge" by which the "Ideas" in the Divine Mind translate themselves as the "laws of Nature." Thus Law begins to operate in the realm of manifestation. As a matter of fact its emergence is simultaneous with the emanation of the Universal Mind and of Spirit-Matter.

It needs to be made clear here that LAW in reality is an aspect of the ABSOLUTE. This is said because once we consider a system of manifestation, our minds will logically inquire: "Where did it come from?" Theosophy answers that there have been endless series of systems of manifestation, embracing countless galaxies and systems of worlds, both in terms of space-extensiveness and in terms of time. They can be traced back in our minds to an infinite, unknown Source in the past, and can be carried forward to an infinite, unknowable future. Theosophy also says that the whole purpose of manifestation is the development of the soul, by which is meant the vital intellectual-emotional faculty using a material body, that makes humanity a separate "kingdom" in Nature. If our propositions have been followed so far, one will sense that there are in reality no barriers to one's own capacity to learn, or to think, or to feel, or to develop and refine the senses of perception and the organs of action. The limitations we have inherently are self-created; our past choices have made our present conditions.

Theosophy then draws our attention to a third Fundamental Proposition, and that is the inherent perfectibility of all evolving entities. By entities is meant intelligent forms. *All* forms are alive and intelligent. There are intelligences ranging in power, potency and capacity from the simple and sub-atomic to the complex and meta-galactical, from the infinitely small to the infinitely great that we can conceive of. Their individual beginnings or ultimate endings we cannot define but can intuitively understand. In a way we are

aware, now, of only a small cross-section of the existence of any entity. Its past is conjectured. Its present visible, physical relationships can be studied and perceived by physical science. Theosophy declares and proves the existence of an infra-physical (or supra-physical) science which lies *within* the purely physical, the realm of forces and impressions, not merely electrical and magnetic, but also intellectual and emotional, which necessarily radiate from all entities and affect all others; those closest, perhaps the most, and those farthest, perhaps the least.

This vast congeries of heterogeneous intelligences, all more or less complex, is governed by general and particular laws and is constantly developing, through experience, new capacities, sensitivities and perceptions till the man-stage is reached.

The human stage is characterized by the capacity to see this complexity intellectually, and to apprehend the laws that pervade it. Man projects upon the screen of his living mind the concepts he develops from such perception of external physical events and mental images. The human stage demands, as a necessary concomitant, a condition of dependence-independence—dependence on all that surrounds us and an increasing degree of freedom of decision. The circumstances we live in are created by the Karma we generated in the past. We are determining our future Karma now.

This is held to be a logical development in the process of manifestation. We observe the independent motions (called "random" in science) of colloidal particles or smoke motes. Plants belonging to one species are not all identical, nor do all animals exhibit identical reactions when confronted with similar situations, any more than humans do. We pass from general progress under the action of *general* Natural Law to a specialized action of the same Law, influenced by our own self-generated thoughts, feelings and actions.

What does Theosophy say about the use of all these ideas in practical, daily life? How are the Fundamental Propositions related to the *Paramitas* of *The Voice of the Silence*? These *Paramitas* or virtues can best be considered in pairs: *Dana* and *Prajna* form one

pair; *Shila* and *Dhyana* form another; and *Kshanti* and *Virya* are a third pair. What is the relationship of qualities such as charity and love to wisdom about the Deity? Of harmony and equity to meditation on LAW and laws? Or of patience and peacefulness to the dauntless energy needed to persevere in the search for the truth about all beings and about the purpose of evolution? How does one go about cultivating "indifference to pleasure and to pain"? How to conquer illusion? How to acquire that single selective vision that enables us to discern *basic truths* through veils of superficial appearances and secondary events?

Practical Theosophy is a process of self-transmutation. Both the universe and man can be divided into seven main constituents. That one which dominates at present is known as *Kama* (passion-desire). *Kama*, in the popular notion, is love, selfish love which is lust. Love of family, wealth, possessions of one kind or another, is all at the selfish level. This selfish love has to be transmuted into *Dana*, the key of Charity and Love immortal. It implies the using of our possessions—physical, mental, moral, spiritual—impersonally and universally. We can *own* nothing. Even our bodies are but borrowed for a time from Nature, from the lower kingdoms. What then can we give? He who reaches successfully the end of the *Paramita* Path becomes a Teacher of Compassion, a Buddha. Love for others demands self-sacrifice. The *Prajna* virtue of compassionate wisdom, a "magic power" in the hearts of all men, makes of a man a God and makes him think, feel and act in universal and impersonal terms. This results in the sacrifice of all that is personal, and in supreme attention to the needs of those who know still less. The Buddha uses the *Nirmanakaya* body he has developed for himself in order to remain in the world and help mankind in an invisible yet most effective manner. He does not retire into *Nirvana*. The *Kama* principle is thus transmuted into the *Buddhi* principle, selfish desire into impersonal wisdom, *Dana* into *Prajna*, the man of flesh into the "God" of Compassion.

Let us pass to the second pair of *Paramitas*—*Shila* and *Dhyana*. On all sides stretches the Universe. So far as we now can determine, or can trust the record of researches of the past, the Universe has

always been under Law—a Law so vast and all-encompassing that it is known as the "harmony of the spheres." It is the law of cycles or of Karma, which operates everywhere, in and around us. The *Shila Paramita* gives one the power to practise harmony in speech and action and to equilibrate causes and effects, leaving no further room for Karmic action. This requires a far-reaching view. Any act of ours either disturbs Karmic harmony or restores it. The disturbance affects not only ourselves but all our fellow beings and the whole of Nature. The knowledge of the laws of Nature, visible and invisible, becomes necessary for the preservation of harmony and leads the Wise Man, the *Dhyani*, to SAT, the eternal Truth. Such a one then becomes a priest unto himself (not unto others—that would be conceit and arrogance), seeing all and feeling all within himself. Using the faculties of the higher mind in ceaseless contemplation and in perfect meditation, he constitutes himself a servant of Nature and of Humanity. Such a Wise One puts himself *en rapport* with the Universal Mind. *Shila* is thus transformed into *Dhyana*—knowledge of universal laws, into practical lawfulness.

Kshanti and *Virya* constitute the third pair of *Paramitas*. Shankaracharya, in his *Vivekachudamani* (*The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom*), refers to the Wise Ones whose wisdom calms and cools the mind and removes suffering, just as the moon brings sweet peace, unruffled serenity, to the earth scorched by the fierce rays of the sun. *Kshanti*-patience implies quiet endurance; it is the underlying basis for gentle persistence and for that confidence which leads one to any chosen goal. Patience sweet that nought can ruffle does not mean supineness or aimless flexibility, but rather gets transmuted into that dauntless *Virya*-like energy which, like the sun, feeds and supports a whole system of worlds with determination to progress. It provides the power to fight its way to the goal, the "supernal TRUTH," which destroys ignorance and falsehood, and gives the basis for progress in the higher virtues. *Kshanti* thus becomes *Virya*, as enduring and as necessary to all things as life itself.

The fourth *Paramita*, *Viraga*, stands alone. It balances the whole system. From it the ways go up and down. When indifference

or equal-mindedness to the pairs of opposites—cold and heat, both physical and psychic, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, etc.—is developed, and when illusion is seen for what it is in the light of universal principles, then alone can TRUTH be perceived. Our lower mind and its powers and faculties, its abilities and its inclinations, its memories and its anticipations—all these and more work with the great deluder, the Maha-Mara. We need to transform the ephemeral into the eternal if we are to secure any basis for right action, if we are to transmute patience into rightly directed energy, harmony into perfect meditation and understanding, and charitableness into compassionate wisdom.

This is the real plane of Kurukshetra, where the personal is vanquished and the impersonal enthroned. The fight is in the mind. Wealth is given up for "trusteeship." Power and position are abandoned in order to "appear as nothing in the eyes of men." Worldly knowledge is transmuted into wisdom. Once this "examination" of discipleship is passed, the "college" of adeptship is entered. We then become custodians of the regenerative Will, to be used not for our own personal progress, but for others' sake.



MAN in his utter ignorance thinks that he is the centre of attraction—the world revolves around him, his pleasure and success are of utmost importance. Nothing else matters to him. But all does not go smoothly all the way. Nature has her own lesson to teach man. Man gradually comes to realize that his dreams are mere castle-building in the air. The universe he once sought to believe his slave is then found too big for him and he is just a speck of dust in the gigantic scheme of things.

Thus man is fooled and forced to know at last that his virtue lies in his humility. Humility teaches man to accept and perform his humble role, irrespective of the rewards it may bring or accolades it may fetch.

—SAMIR KANTA GUPTA

OUTER SPACE AND THE INNER REALM

Secreted and hidden in the heart of the world and in the heart of man is the light which can illuminate all life, the future and the past. Shall we not search for it? Surely some must do so.

—*Through the Gates of Gold*

Of all the hard facts of science . . . I know of none more solid and fundamental than the fact that if you inhibit thought (and persevere) you come at length to a region of consciousness below or behind thought and different from ordinary thought in its nature and character—a consciousness of quasi-universal quality, and a realization of an altogether Vaster Self than that to which we are accustomed.

—EDWARD CARPENTER

WITH the exploration of outer space and the search for life on other planets going on apace, none can afford to ignore the possibilities being opened up. Culture today must necessarily include an acquaintance with at least some of the ideas of science. Ours is indeed the age of rockets, spacecrafts and space travel. We have entered a realm of gigantic and dramatic adventure, the bringing of space closer to us than ever before.

But while it is necessary to know the "facts" of science, it is more important still to relate these facts to human affairs and to find how the discoveries of science have been used or can be used by man—that is, their potential application to human needs. When a man travels to the moon or any other planet, imprisoned inside a rocket like a caterpillar within a cocoon, will that man be transformed or will he return the same man he was here on earth? In the glamour and thrill of the adventure, let us not ignore that basic issue.

Even in our study of science we often overlook that, besides the learning of scientific facts and discoveries, there is another aspect which touches directly the scientist as a human being, namely, the discipline of science and its objective. For behind science lies man's eternal quest for truth, the scientist's will to seek and to find knowledge. What constitutes the scientific spirit? What are its

techniques and its procedures, and how have these influenced humanity? These are questions more important than the actual "findings" in the various scientific fields. We need an insight into what science is about. In all questions we have these two aspects representing two different levels of investigation. External data is one level; but behind it lies the human significance.

The essence of science is the hunger to expand the field of human knowledge. New dimensions have come into our thinking as the outer horizons have expanded. But these new dimensions are still of the same objective order and related to external horizons. There is an altogether different kind of dimension, related not to outer space but to man's inner consciousness. It represents another way of knowing, call it if you please the mystic way or the way of *Yoga*, a way ignored today by the modern man. It is an adventure into the realm of the Spirit, an exploration of man's own heart, his innermost Self.

It was Socrates who said, "I am not yet able to know myself and it seems to me ridiculous, while ignorant of myself, that I should inquire into what I am not concerned with."

Socrates' point of view has today slipped into oblivion. The old philosopher would not have altogether approved of our excursions into space! While they add to our knowledge of astronomy, they do not reveal to us the nature of the Self. Socrates might also—and justly—comment on the disputes that are bound to arise should we really succeed in conquering other planets. Is any planet subject to sovereignty? And, if so, to whose sovereignty? That of the Earth as a whole? Not content with our sorrowful star's problems, we now are concerning ourselves with the legal questions involved in ownership of space beyond the Earth!

Would it not be more profitable to resolve the conflict within man himself and thus pave the way to an age of peace and well-being?

We cannot expect many to take seriously to the way of *Yoga*, but we certainly could all benefit by the recognition of its existence. Modern science could indeed profit by a study—even if merely academic—of such a classic as Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, which

describe the discipline necessary to explore that inner realm of the Spirit and to attain to divine awareness or divine union. Such explorations need no physical instruments or elaborate and difficult external preparations. Instead they demand living a life of virtue and of altruism and the cultivation of *dhyana*, or meditation, whose golden gate leads toward the realm of Truth Eternal.

To most people "spiritual knowledge" means some glorification of the senses, some perception of objects. But spiritual perception is the entering directly into the nature of things, not as objects, but as phases of consciousness. We cannot *know* in the ultimate sense, unless we know from within. No amount of purely external investigation and accumulation of objective data will ever reveal the hidden heart of life.

On the other hand, through participation in divine union all mysteries can be unveiled. Yes, so that a knowledge of the planets themselves, not merely of their outward envelope, is possible through contemplation. However unintelligible to the man of science today, the following aphorisms from Book III of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* made sense in olden days to the practitioner of the Divine Discipline, and remain true today, a challenge to the modern mind:

By concentrating his mind upon the sun, a knowledge arises in the ascetic concerning all spheres between the earth and the sun.

By concentrating his mind upon the moon, there arises in the ascetic a knowledge of the fixed stars.

By concentrating his mind upon the polar star, the ascetic is able to know the fixed time and motion of every star in the *Brahmanda* [universe] of which this earth is a part.

Shall we not make a beginning and practise a little introspection? Let us not disregard altogether the Wisdom of the Ancients, and amidst the hubbub and discord of the outer world let us learn to turn within that we may rediscover the realm of the Self in us and claim our divine inheritance.

TRUE MAGIC A DIVINE SCIENCE

Magic is the science of communicating with and directing supernal, supramundane Potencies, as well as of commanding those of the lower spheres; a practical knowledge of the hidden mysteries of nature known to only the few, because they are so difficult to acquire, without falling into sins against nature....Withal magic is not something *supernatural*.

—*The Theosophical Glossary*

THE real meaning of the word "magic" is hardly known to our modern generation. It is commonly understood to be a form of jugglery, of conjuring, that glammers and bewilders the spectators and seems to transcend the operation of Law. Thus people have come to believe in miracles. The first of the Ten Items of Oriental Psychology is that there are no miracles; everything happens according to the laws of nature. It is quite possible that such laws may not be known or understood by the untrained and undisciplined modern minds; but that does not disprove the fact of the existence of those laws. The Master-Magicians of ancient times understood them; therefore they could control nature and nature's forces. They were the Knowers of the essence of things, and the knowledge they handed down is known as Divine Wisdom, Theurgy, *Raja Yoga*, the Science of the Soul.

The dictionary meaning of the word "Magic" is "witchcraft," "necromancy"; also "the art of influencing the course of events by occult control of nature." These meanings are not incorrect because Magic is both White and Black, and the line of demarcation between the two is very, very thin. It very much depends upon the motive of the individual, whether he uses his knowledge for his own good and glory or to benefit mankind. Man has within him both the divine and the demoniac tendencies; therefore it is necessary to ascertain the motive, so that one may not fall a prey to the forces of darkness. *The Voice of the Silence*, "dedicated to the Few" who desire to discipline themselves, begins with the following words: "These instructions are for those ignorant of the dangers of the lower *IDDHI*." A footnote explains the lower *Iddhi*

as the coarse psychic and mental energies. The aspiring soul has to realize his unity with the whole of nature, has to recognize that if he achieves anything in isolation or separation from others, he is going on the wrong path, the path of selfishness or Black Magic.

The words "magic" and "magician" are derived from "Mage" or "Magi," the learned adepts of Persia and Media. *The Theosophical Glossary* explains the word "Maga" as "the priests of the Sun, mentioned in the *Vishnu Purana*. They are the later Magi of Chaldea and Iran." "Magic consists of, and is acquired by, the worship of the gods," said Plato. Such worship consists in putting oneself in attunement with, becoming worthy of relationship with, the divine forces and powers in nature, which are but the highest emanations of the One Divine Principle of Life, or God. For such attunement or relationship, true faith, *Shraddha*, in one's own Self is absolutely necessary. *The Voice of the Silence* asks: "Knowest thou of Self the powers, O thou perceiver of external shadows?" Only the aspirant who knows can understand the real implication of the injunction of the Delphic Oracle, "Man, Know Thyself."

The *Glossary* gives two interesting quotations from Western writers. Dr. Carter Blake is quoted as remarking that "the nineteenth century is not that which has observed the genesis of new, nor the completion of old, methods of thought"; to which Mr. Bonwick adds that "if the ancients knew but little of our mode of investigations into the secrets of nature, we know still less of their mode of research." It is a fact that the methods of investigation of the ancients and those of the moderns are quite different. The ancients began their search on the plane of homogeneity and came down to our objective, material, phenomenal world; they proceeded from the universals to the particulars, which is the right approach to Life and its phenomena on various planes. The moderns begin their work in the objective world and try to penetrate matter and to find out the Truth behind it. They start with the particulars and try to go to the hidden forces behind; that is why they have not been able to solve the mysteries of nature and of Life. It is only by realizing that

man is a copy of nature, that within him are all the powers and forces that exist in nature, that by purifying himself he can control nature, obtain soul-wisdom and reach to the stature of conscious godhood, that the task can be accomplished.

Madame Blavatsky states in *Isis Unveiled* (II, 635): "*The trinity of nature is the lock of magic, the trinity of man the key that fits it.*" It is only through a correct understanding of the triple aspects of nature and of man that the close relationship between the two can be realized. What is this trinity? (1) The objective, physical, visible aspects of nature and of man. (2) The indwelling, energizing, animating, invisible aspects of both. (3) The immortal, sovereign Spirit, the root and source of the visible and invisible emanations on all planes of Life. When the inner, energizing principle of man unites with its parent source, he becomes Immortal. That is Divine Wisdom, White Magic, *Raja Yoga*. The key lies within man; he and he alone can seek kinship with nature and unlock her mysteries, aid her, elevate her, and fulfil the aim and object of human evolution. Krishna also points to the same teaching in the Fifteenth Discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

There are two kinds of beings in the world, the one divisible, the other indivisible; the divisible is all things and the creatures, the indivisible is called Kutastha, or he who standeth on high unaffected. But there is another spirit designated as the Supreme Spirit—Paramatma—which permeates and sustains the three worlds.

The inner, indivisible, Buddhi-Manasic aspect in man has to unite with the Supreme Spirit; then and then only can he master the lower, perishable, divisible aspect of himself and of nature. The alchemists of old used to transmute base metals into gold; similarly man has to transmute his animal consciousness into human consciousness, Manasic consciousness; then that consciousness becomes fit to receive the Divine Light and become Divine. Man is a ray of that Divine, omnipresent principle of Life. How this transmutation takes place and what it results in is well explained in Book II of the *Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*. Just one verse (verse

41), can indicate how much can be accomplished:

From purification of the mind and body also ensue to the Yogee a complete predominance of the quality of goodness, complacency, intentness, subjugation of the senses, and fitness for contemplation and comprehension of the soul as distinct from nature.

All this cannot be done overnight; long, patient and persevering effort is necessary, and one has to climb from the lowest rung of the ladder. Says Madame Blavatsky in her *Key to Theosophy*:

The Ego begins his life-pilgrimage as a sprite, an "Ariel," or a "Puck"; he plays the part of a *super*, is a soldier, a servant, one of the chorus; rises then to "speaking parts," plays leading *roles*, interspersed with insignificant parts, till he finally retires from the stage as "Prospero," the *magician*. (pp. 34-35)

Life has always been compared to a stage, each human soul playing many, many parts until he reaches the summit of glorious Light Nirvanic and decides to shed that Light to remove a little of the darkness of this world. Altruistic motive sustained from beginning to end will transform the man into a Super-Man. "It is this collective light which is the 'Wisdom that is from above,' and which whenever it descends on the personal Ego, is found 'pure, peaceable, gentle' " (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 32*, p. 5). In the same pamphlet, which reprints H.P.B.'s article, "The Dual Aspect of Wisdom," it is also stated:

There was a time when the acquirement of Divine Wisdom (*Sapientia*) required the sacrifice and devotion of a man's whole life. It depended on such things as the purity of the candidate's motives, on his fearlessness and independence of spirit; but now, to receive a patent for wisdom and adeptship requires only unblushing impudence.

This shows how ignorant the world is in reference to White Magic or Divine Wisdom. Through her books and articles Madame Blavatsky has given grave warnings to beware of the dark forces of

nature that exist in the visible and invisible worlds around us, and has enjoined us to make sincere and steadfast efforts at self-purification so as to make of oneself a focal point for the radiation of the Light of Wisdom. The obstacles on the way were also indicated, one of them being passivity of mind, which would make possible an easy entrance for the dark forces leading to mediumship and Black Magic. On the other hand, receptivity of mind, clear thinking, controlled emotions, would lead an individual to active mediatorship between the world of Light and the realm of darkness, shedding the Light acquired for the benefit of his fellow pilgrims. This is White Magic, Divine Wisdom, *Raja Yoga*.

TODAY scientists feel the need for a change in outlook. Many of them realize the deficiency and limitations of science as the only saviour of mankind. It is seen with increasing clarity that values are not—and cannot be—manufactured in factories or in laboratories, howsoever technologically perfect they might be.

New, unforeseen, and peculiar insights by way of revelations from the study of particle and quantum physics have forced scientists to reconsider their stand on religion and superconscious reality. Evolutionary biologists, physicists, and mathematicians have begun to acknowledge the vastness and limitlessness of phenomena beyond the scope of human comprehension. Also they no longer deny the vast potential and variety of human achievements where it is impossible to limit expressions of knowledge and discovery.

Adding spiritual dimensions to a scientific frame of mind is thus being slowly accepted. The terrain here is alien; the terms of references are new. But there are saints and sages, prophets and mystics who have already trodden this path with some amount of success, getting closer to Divinity.

Hence we need not be afraid to explore new territories and areas of human knowledge and excellence. We might be required to adopt different methods, but the goal is the same: to seek that joy and knowledge which is our own true nature.

—C. S. SHAH

SELF-AWARENESS THROUGH EDUCATION

"KNOW thyself" was ever the advice of our elders in ancient days, but in our times formal education has been imparting mostly head-learning, with emphasis on information. Many parents and teachers are disturbed about this trend. However, there is now hope of better times to come. As the report of The Education Commission for the Twenty-first Century, popularly known as the Delors Report, puts it, there are four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to live with others, learning to do, and learning to be. Now every human being can look upon education not only as formal schooling, but as a lifelong activity for which everyone is responsible to himself or herself.

Today, it is universally recognized that education as a vehicle for human development is best reflected in the concept of Life Skills Education, which is now the focus of educational programmes and processes in many countries of the world. In India too this idea is beginning to take root and will soon be introduced in both formal and non-formal educational curricula. The original list of Life Skills as published by the World Health Organization (WHO) includes Self-awareness. Indian educators have decided that this should be the first of the Life Skills to be listed.

Looking at it from the learner's point of view, the question that young children sheltered in the family, or unsheltered and on their own on the streets, ask most often is, "Who am I?" This is something that all of us at some time or other have wondered at. At different times different answers have been offered. Most often the human soul is caught in the delusion of personality and identifies with it, but at the same time it is not satisfied with this answer. There is a feeling of inner discontent; and, further, there is a deeper certainty that there is more to self than the human mind and personality. In *Isis Unveiled* it is well described:

From the remotest antiquity *mankind as a whole have always been convinced of the existence of a personal spiritual entity within the personal physical man.* This inner entity was more or

less divine, according to its proximity to the *crown*—Chrestos. The closer the union the more serene man's destiny, the less dangerous the external conditions. This belief is neither bigotry nor superstition, only an ever-present, instinctive feeling of the proximity of another spiritual and invisible world, which, though it be subjective to the senses of the outward man, is perfectly objective to the inner ego. (II, 593)

Poets with their intuition are able to catch a glimpse of this inner world, which also explains the origin of man. As Wordsworth puts it, "...trailing clouds of glory do we come," and our minds respond to all such intuitive perceptions. How can we cultivate Self-awareness as a Life Skill? Without this essential Life Skill we cannot survive in an environment which is full of risks to our physical and mental well-being. This is why WHO originally proposed this Life Skill to help young people who were considered to be at risk and who with better Self-awareness could face the environment that posed such risks. This is the very promise of the above-quoted passage from *Isis Unveiled*: "The closer the union the more serene man's destiny." It calls for constant search and alertness; asking right questions and placing total reliance upon the *Ishvara* or the Higher Self within. It needs dispassionate observation of the complex nature of man and understanding the Theosophical teaching of his seven states and principles. The clarity with which these are explained in *The Key to Theosophy* can touch the right chord in many a young inquiring mind. Attention is invited to the table on page 90 of the *Key* and the footnote explaining it:

In Mr. Sinnett's "Esoteric Buddhism" *d*, *e*, and *f* [*Kama rupa*, *Manas*, and *Buddhi*] are respectively called the Animal, the Human, and the Spiritual Souls, which answers as well. Though the principles in *Esoteric Buddhism* are numbered, this is, strictly speaking, useless. The dual *Monad* alone (*Atma-Buddhi*) is susceptible of being thought of as the two highest numbers (the 6th and 7th). As to all others, since *that* "principle" only which is predominant in man has to be considered as the first and foremost, no numeration is possible as a general rule. In some men it is the higher Intelligence (*Manas* or the 5th) which

dominates the rest; in others the Animal Soul (Kama-rupa) that reigns supreme, exhibiting the most bestial instincts, etc.

There are in this explanatory note many subtle hints about the demarcation between the mortal and the immortal entity and the gravitation of the Manas downward or upward which will determine the Karmic destiny of man, and which older students of Theosophy may ponder over with advantage.

Self-awareness would involve recognizing the higher and lower principles in man and how they work. It would mean watching over and controlling the human mind as it sways sometimes towards the animal soul and sometimes towards the spiritual soul. Self-awareness would come gradually and can be maintained by constant vigilance and dependence on the Atman-Parabrahman that pervades the universe and also "shoots its effulgent beams on the Disciple from the very first. Its rays thread through the thick, dark clouds of matter."

The upward gravitation can be maintained by realizing where each human being stands within the community, by discharging his duties to nature, to animals, and to all other human beings, by discovering the bonds of empathy that bind us together as pilgrim-souls on the same path.

No Theosophist has the right to this name, unless he is thoroughly imbued with the correctness of Carlyle's truism: "The end of man is an *action* and not a *thought*, though it were the noblest" — and unless he sets and models his daily life upon this truth. The profession of a truth is not yet the enactment of it; and the more beautiful and grand it sounds, the more loudly virtue or duty is talked about instead of being acted upon, the more forcibly it will always remind one of the Dead Sea fruit. *Cant* is the most loathsome of all vices.

—*The Key to Theosophy*

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Miracle stories are central to each faith and there are millions of people worldwide who believe in them, writes Kenneth L. Woodward in his *Book of Miracles*, excerpts from which are published in *Newsweek* for May 1. No doubt there are many scoffers—those who look upon such stories as superstition or mere coincidence—yet the belief in "extraordinary events that are the result of special acts of God" is strongly entrenched.

Every week of the year [writes Woodward], somewhere in the world, believers gather to celebrate the miraculous deeds that God or gods, a saint or a sage, worked on behalf of the faithful. Many Jews and Buddhists, as well as Christians, Hindus and Muslims, still look for—and, by their own accounts, experience—miraculous interventions in their lives....

For the believers, the real question isn't one of fact but of faith. Whether the story is a sacred event like the parting of the Red Sea or a contemporary account of a healing, the impulse is to ask, "Did this miracle really happen?" The important issue, however, is not if a miracle "really" happened but what believers make of the stories of miracles, whether the miraculous took place on the journey to the Promised Land 3,000 years ago or in Philadelphia in our own time....So if we are to grasp why so many people hold fast to these stories, we have to know the tradition in which the story unfolds and how miracles are understood in each faith.

Most people who pray for "miracles" ask for cures—for themselves or for loved ones. "Indeed, in all the world's religions," says Woodward, "the most common miracles are those concerned with prayers offered anonymously at shrines"; and he goes on to give instances of "miracle stories" derived from different faiths and traditions.

Well over a century ago, H.P.B. proclaimed the reality of an unseen world governed by laws and forces subject to the control of the will of man. At the end of *Isis Unveiled* is a terse summary of the fundamental propositions of Oriental philosophy which, though

unacknowledged today by psychic investigators, are none the less gradually gaining ground, albeit in different words. For anyone really interested in the subject, a study of the laws governing these realms is necessary, and the masterly survey of the subject in *Isis Unveiled* forms an excellent starting point.

H.P.B.'s first bold proposition is: "There is no miracle." Super-physical or psycho-spiritual phenomena do take place, but to establish the truth that such phenomena occur is not necessarily to understand them. There is nothing outside the ambit of law. The ancient Asiatics knew the laws of the psychic and spiritual realms, and, therefore, rejected all talk of miracles.

What says Theosophy about cures which defy any physical explanation? Just as the mind has power, acting through the astral body and the desire nature, to injure its physical body, so it has most remarkable power to heal; and instances of such healing are dubbed "miracles."

Healing, to deserve the name, requires either faith in the patient, or robust health united with a strong will, in the operator. *With expectancy supplemented by faith, one can cure himself of almost any morbid condition.* The tomb of a saint; a holy relic; a talisman; a bit of paper or a garment that has been handled by the supposed healer; a nostrum; a penance, or a ceremonial; the laying on of hands, or a few words impressively pronounced—either will do. It is a question of temperament, imagination, self-cure. In thousands of instances, the doctor, the priest, or the relic has had credit for healings that were solely and simply due to the patient's unconscious will. The woman with the bloody issue who pressed through the throng to touch the robe of Jesus, was told that her "faith" had made her whole.

The influence of mind over the body is so powerful that it has effected miracles at all ages. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 216)

In 1998, British scholar Bruce Lloyd initiated a "Wisdom of the World" Web project in conjunction with the World Future Society. In the May-June issue of *The Futurist*, he discusses humanity's

fundamental problem of understanding what wisdom really is and how little of it is either taught or learned.

Today, the widespread use of computers has created new challenges from what is known as the "information explosion." It is natural to ask what we are learning, and, more importantly, what we need to learn. At the same time, says Lloyd,

there has been the influence of the new millennium itself. This event is probably the greatest learning point in human history. Never before has so much intellectual effort been focused on reflecting on—and learning from—our history. In essence, that reflective learning should start by trying to define what has been distilled into wisdom. This effort has focused on exploring three key questions: Where have we come from? What are we doing here? and, Where are we going?

If learning is critical, we then have to ask ourselves: What is wisdom? How do we learn it? and, How can we pass it on more effectively?... It is quite justifiable to argue that knowledge is information in use and wisdom is the combination of knowledge and values....

Wisdom is one thing; being wise is quite another. Being wise is certainly more than the ability to recycle wisdom—it involves the ability to apply wisdom in practice....

We may assume that if we have learned the right things, we ought to be in a position to do the right thing with that knowledge....If that is the case, then we probably need to revisit the messages of wisdom to ensure that we give a higher priority to those that reflect the importance of meaning and motivation in human behaviour.

This is not an academic exercise. Our future is critically dependent on what we learn, and, unless this subject is given much greater attention, it is extremely unlikely that we will make progress, however you want to define it.

Esoteric Philosophy differentiates between two kinds of knowledge—the unreal and the real, the terrestrial and the divine, head-learning and soul-wisdom. Not only in *The Voice of the Silence* is this distinction drawn, but H.P.B.'s article "The Dual Aspect of Wisdom" goes into the matter fully. In the *Mundaka*

Upanishad this dual aspect of knowledge is called *Para* and *Apara Vidya*. The Christian scriptures also draw the distinction:

St. James teaches two kinds of wisdom; a teaching with which we fully concur. He draws a strong line of separation between the divine or *noetic* "Sophia"—the wisdom from above—and the terrestrial, psychic, and devilish Wisdom....For the true Theosophist there is no wisdom save the former....With regard to "psychic" wisdom, however, which James defines as terrestrial and devilish, it has existed in all ages, from the days of Pythagoras and Plato, when for one *philosophus* there were nine *sophistae*, down to our modern era. (H.P.B. in *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 32*)

As genetic science advances, fears are being expressed that acting on incomplete knowledge may well yield unforeseen, disastrous consequences. Some scientists argue that nothing be done to irreversibly alter the genome of a species because we simply cannot know all the functions of a gene that developed over millennia of evolution, and what its forced mutation might mean. Genetic pollution, and abuses ranging from the creation of "genetically correct" people to the monopolization of seed supplies, might occur. (*New Perspectives Quarterly*, Fall 1999)

As former UNESCO chief Federico Mayor sees it, "where human reproduction is concerned, as with technology in general, we must be guided by respect for three basic and interdependent principles—dignity, freedom and solidarity.

For human dignity to be respected [he says] each person must be regarded as unique. This position has far-reaching consequences for human procreation. First of all, it rules out cloning as a means of reproduction because this technique, which is almost upon us, involves genetically "duplicating" an existing person. More generally, predetermining the basic characteristics of a future person, notably trying to enhance their future physical or mental capacities, violates the very essence of human individuality. This kind of engineering would end up depriving individuals of that which is theirs alone—the

mysterious processes whereby their unique genetic heritage emerges and interacts in its own unique way with their environment.

Advances in prenatal scanning and testing techniques may confront parents with grave new decisions. The danger is that various kinds of pressures or even regulations will develop which only allow "genetically correct" people to be born. This would be totally unacceptable. No authority—be it political, social or economic—should be able to enact such a "genetic order," still less impose it....

The risk of uncontrolled, unmonitored genetic engineering increasingly looms over us. But we are starting to see the emergence of a new "responsible" form of genetic engineering in which the power of science is subjected to the power of ethics—an ethics that benefits everyone, not just a few, and looks toward future generations, not just short-term interests.

Mass extinction of species may no longer be associated only with the distant past. A paper released by the International Botanical Congress has reported that extinction rates have reached levels on par with the five known mass extinctions of the past. According to the report, between one-third and two-thirds of all plant and animal species will be lost by the end of the 21st century. The extinction rate over the past few centuries is almost 1,000 times higher than the background rate, or the rate at which species have become extinct for the past 65 million years: If current trends continue, this may climb to 10,000 times the background rate.

Too bad for the species—and especially for man, who is an integral part of nature. Saving nature's species is tantamount to saving ourselves.

The concept of globalization in various spheres of life is catching on, and now experts are talking of the globalization of disease. According to Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director General of the

World Health Organization, in the years to come the health of everyone across the globe will be more tightly linked than ever before. Writing in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, he says:

An antibiotic-resistant strain of tuberculosis can already travel more quickly on an airplane from Africa to California than panicked financial capital can flee from Thailand, Brazil or Russia to New York and London....

If we don't make the necessary investments in health care systems so that tuberculosis or "hot zone" diseases such as the ebola virus can be properly treated and eradicated in the poor tropics, they can easily infect all continents, as HIV/AIDS has....

In short, as the planet becomes both smaller and warmer, "world health" will become a reality as never before. As never before, the well-being of poor and rich alike will be intertwined. In the 21st century, the globalization of disease will mean the interdependence of health.

The world is becoming small indeed! We are interdependent in many ways—for good as for ill.

It is no longer enough to say that poverty is the main reason for disease and suffering, and that ill health in turn is the cause of so much poverty. As Brundtland observes, there must be an understanding of the real conditions that breed disease and a commitment to change them by all—the poor and the affluent alike.

A UNESCO study—"The killing screen: violence on television and its impact on children"—says that the world's children spend an average of three hours daily in front of the TV screen. That is at least 50 per cent more time spent with this medium than with any other out-of-school activity, including homework, being with family or friends, or reading. In other words, television dominates the lives of children in urban and electrified rural areas around the world. This is the largest ever intercultural study on the impact of media violence on children.

Audiovisual media in particular [says the report] are more graphic in their depiction of violence than books or newspapers; they leave less freedom in the individual images which the viewers associate with the stories.

We have leap-frogged an era in our exposure to media....The sheer volume and density of this media explosion is frightening. Statistics may be boring and seldom tell the entire story. However, they do help establish the fact that a child's exposure to violence on television—real or fictionalized—is very high. We have to ask how much violence must there be before we say enough, no more!

Much can be said against the quality and type of television programming; but does it not indicate that there must be something radically wrong with a society which demands and supplies such programmes? What makes children as well as adults accept such inferior entertainment? What makes them turn to a fantasy world for escape and accept violence in a matter-of-fact way? Cannot enlightened public opinion make television networks and sponsors realize what they are doing to the impressionable minds of the rising generation and get them to see the wisdom of featuring better programmes? Is it wise on the part of parents to leave their children free to make unlimited use of the television set? Or should the elders decide what they want the youngsters to see and what they want to keep them from seeing? These are the questions that need to be probed.

Where lies the centre of the Universe? Sadhu Vishwamurtidas has this to say:

Scientists say the physical universe has no objective centre because the universe itself is expanding in all directions as a four-dimensional space-time continuum. Space-time itself is in the process of expansion. Therefore there can be no fixed background or in-built co-ordinate system against which to chart the ballooning cosmos and extrapolate even a hypothetical central point of origin.

Such may be the case from a technical point of view, but from a more pragmatic perspective, each and every living person is the centre of the universe, since for each person the universe exists only because he or she is there to observe it....The spokes of the great cosmic cartwheel emerge from you and merge back into you. You are the centre—wherever you are....

The two milestone theorems—Godel's Theorem and Searle's "Chinese Room" prove that mere information processing is not enough for divine knowledge. Self-awareness or consciousness is a pre-requisite. So where does this leave us? For purely survival and propagation purposes, not only is the human being over-endowed with information processing capacity, he or she also possesses consciousness. Why are we humans so over-endowed with intelligence? What is the purpose? The answer is clear and inevitable.

The purpose of human life is to search for the Ultimate Truth. But which Truth? The Truth behind the culmination of all truths—physical, philosophical and psychological; the truth behind every word, concept or dream that may or may not be listed in all the dictionaries and encyclopaedias of the world; the truth of everything, including ourselves....

The true purpose behind human life is not sensuality but spirituality. If we do not utilize our special ability to contemplate and understand ultimate truths, it means we have lived lives parallel to those of other animals in the galaxy—oblivious of everything but the here and now. (*The Times of India*, April 3)

CEASE'not to think of the Universe as one living Being, possessed of a single Substance and a single Soul; and how all things trace back to its single aliveness; and how it does all things by a single impulse; and how all existing things are joint causes of all things that come into existence; and how intertwined in the fabric is the thread and how closely woven the web.

—MARCUS AURELIUS